

VZCZCXRO7236  
PP RUEHGI RUEHMA RUEHROV  
DE RUEHKH #0080/01 0211340  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 211340Z JAN 08  
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9741  
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE  
RHMFISS/CJTJF HOA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000080

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/SPG, S/CRS  
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: EL FASHER ARABS DEFENSIVE ABOUT MUSA HILAL APPOINTMENT

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: In a January 17 meeting with FieldOff, representatives of two Arab tribes in El Fasher were defensive about President Bashir's appointment of former janjaweed militia leader Sheikh Musa Hilal to the post of Advisor to the Minister of Federal Rule. The Arab reps dismissed the posting as ceremonial but nonetheless insisted it was a Presidential prerogative with which the international community should not concern itself. Other observers note that this appointment could incite tempers among Darfurians who suffered at the hands of the very militias Hilal once commanded. Reaction among the African tribes will be reported septel. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) In a January 17 meeting with FieldOff, representatives of two Arab tribes in El Fasher, North Darfur - the Itiefat and the Mahamid - framed the Darfur conflict in terms of tribal relations. (Note: Musa Hilal is himself a Mahamid, though the community is reportedly split with one part of the tribe supporting him, and the other against. End note). They echoed commonly-heard themes about reconciliation that could be ameliorated only through provision of assistance and services by the international community, particularly by the USG. They insisted that the crisis in Darfur was a "normal" one in African terms, one that required humanitarian aid until a peace agreement could be reached. However, they expressed suspicions about the perceived agenda of the international community and especially international NGOs, citing the example of Zoe's Ark in Abeche, Chad, as illustrative of the West's "ulterior motives" for Darfur. They complained about the international community's "neglect" of the situation in South Sudan in favor of that in Darfur. They also questioned the international community's commitment to implement the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) fairly, since it had imposed sanctions unequally against Arab parties to the conflict (they pointed to Musa Hilal, who was sanctioned by the United Nations Security Council under resolution 1672, while no DPA non-signatory rebel movement leaders had been directly sanctioned).

¶3. (SBU) The Arab representatives claimed that President Bashir's appointment of former janjaweed militia leader Musa Hilal to the post of Advisor to the Minister of Federal Rule was nothing out of the ordinary. The Arab reps recounted for FieldOff names of other Arab leaders given similar posts as part of "normal" appointments by the GoS; Jafar Abdel Hakim, the ex-Wali (Governor) of West Darfur; and Ibrahim Abdalla Mohamed, the ex-Wali of North Darfur, now advisor to the Wali of South Darfur. They said the GoS had a different perspective on human resource matters than did the international community, which should respect the GoS' prerogative in such internal affairs. When asked about the responsibilities of Hilal's designated post, the reps dismissed it as more ceremonial than decision-making in nature and went so far as to speculate that Hilal would hold no real power in the GoS.

¶4. (SBU) The Arab tribal reps justified Hilal's past campaigns against Darfuri populations by saying that he had merely led certain groups in defense of his own tribal affiliations during wartime,

just as rebel leaders do with their movements. They claimed that Hilal held no privileged tribal status, insisting he was "just another tribal leader" among many. The Arab reps also claimed the GoS was trying to rein in any remaining influence Hilal might have over militias by giving him a posting that would physically remove him from his former area of operations and re-locate him to Khartoum, where he would be unable to carry out any of the alleged atrocities for which he was sanctioned by the UNSC [NOTE: The Arab reps also insisted that Hilal was indicted by the ICC, like fellow former janjaweed leader Ali Kushayb, but in fact the ICC has not issued such a warrant. END NOTE].

15. (SBU) The Arab tribal leaders questioned the international community's neutrality given its interest in Musa Hilal's appointment. If the world wanted to point fingers at warlords who became politicians, they argued, it needed look no further than Minni Minawi, who went from being a Sudan Liberation Army rebel leader to the fourth highest ranking official in the GoS and the head of the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority.

16. (SBU) COMMENT: It was clear from this conversation, as from past conversations with other Arab reps in El Fasher, that considerable loyalty remains between Arab Darfuri tribes and the regime in Khartoum. The most compelling motive for the GOS to appoint Hilal as an advisor is no doubt to retain the loyalty of the part of the Mahamid tribe that supports Hilal, especially given recent moves by some Arab groups to ally themselves with insurgents. There is talk among African Darfuris in El Fasher that the Hilal appointment could incite tempers among Darfurians who suffered at the hands of the militias Hilal once commanded. Although some African Darfuris think Hilal's position will give him cover for future atrocities, we find this argument baseless since Hilal can do less damage in Darfur if he is in Khartoum. Additional reaction from the local populations will be reported septel.

KHARTOUM 00000080 002 OF 002

17. (SBU) Tripoli minimize considered.

FERNANDEZ